THREE LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO THE

PEOPLE OF GREAT BRITAIN,

&c. &c.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

THREE LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO THE

PEOPLE OF GREAT BRITAIN

ON THE FAILURE OF THE

LATE NEGOTIATION.

INCLUDING

A FEW HINTS

ON THE

CONDUCT PROPER TO BE ADOPTED

IN THE

PRESENT SITUATION OF AFFAIRS.

Oh! ſhun that gulph; that gaping ruin ſhun.

THOMSON

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MDCCXCVII.

THREE LETTERS,

&c. &c.

THE fair illuſion, then, is vaniſhed. It is not yet, it ſeems, found expedient to yield to the cries of much injured humanity. The murderous ſword, therefore, is to remain unſheathed, and the torch of deſolation is ſtill to blaze. But was the lovely form of Peace held up only to amuſe and to deceive us? or on what malignant power are we to heap our execrations, for interpoſing to ſnatch her from our eager embraces? Is it with the Directory at Paris, or in the cabinet of St. James's, that we are to ſeek for this foe to our happineſs?

From reviewing the hiſtory of this negociation (if I may ſo call it) now in

our hands, it will, I imagine, immediately appear that neither party is exempt from blame; but to whom the largeſt ſhare is due, to whoſe account we are to charge the lengthened miſeries of Europe, is the queſtion to which our attention ſhould be directed, and which the facts we are in poſſeſſion of will perhaps enable us without much difficulty to determine. Let us then in the firſt place take a curſory view of the projet delivered by our ambaſſador, containing the outlines of the plan for the application of his principle of mutual ceſſion and compenſation.

It requires of France to give up all the Auſtrian territory ſhe has conquered in Italy,—a conqueſt of no ſmall importance it will be allowed: and likewiſe to reſtore thoſe rich and extenſive provinces in the Netherlands which heretofore belonged to the Emperor, but which, agreeable it appears, to the wiſhes of the inhabitants, have been united to France; who has ſolemnly engaged to protect them in the enjoyment of that new poli-

tical

tical ſyſtem, which, under her auſpices, has been eſtabliſhed, and on whoſe part, therefore, it would ſurely be treacherous, unleſs imperious neceſſity rendered it unavoidable, to abandon them to a power, of whoſe clemency the fate of La Fayette, his family and companions, will help us to form an idea. — And to compenſate her for theſe reſtitutions, we propoſe to reſtore Martinico, St. Lucia and Tobago in the Weſt Indies, and the ſettlements of Pondicherry, Chandenagore, &c. in the Eaſt, to which we muſt not forget to add the Iſlands of St. Pierre and Miquelon in North America, and the right of fiſhery at Newfoundland;—with this reſervation however, that if we wave the right (which is given us it ſeems by the treaty of Utrecht in 1713) of oppoſing the ceſſion to the French of the Spaniſh part of St. Domingo, we ſhall expect one or two of the other iſlands as the price of our conſent, and in order to maintain the balance of power in that quarter.—Conſidering likewiſe the emancipation of the Negroes there, like the eſtabliſhment of liberty in France, as a dan-

dangerous nuiſance, which, according to Mr. Burke's law of vicinage, we were entitled to remonſtrate againſt, inaſmuch as it might affect the ſafety of our own poſſeſſions; where, abominable thought! thoſe unfortunate human beings are kept in a ſtate of unqualified ſlavery, a deſire is expreſſed that they would readopt a ſyſtem of internal regulations ſo nearly correſpondent to our own, as to remove the apprehenſions that were entertained on that ſubject—And the latter part of the 5th clauſe, requiring that adequate arrangements ſhould be made for the removal of *all* ſequeſtrations, ſeems to imply a demand that the Emigrants, thoſe *perſons* (I cannot apply an epithet to them ſufficiently expreſſive of my abhorrence) who not only renounced their country, but excited againſt it a moſt furious and deſtructive cruſade from without, and a ſtill more unnatural and calamitous war within,) though I would not be underſtood to include every individual who ſuffers as an Emigrant in this charge,) I ſay that theſe

perſons

perſons ſhould be allowed to recover what was once their property.

With reſpect to the Dutch, our quondam allies, for whoſe ſake it was aſſerted we entered into the war, and upon whoſe poſſeſſions it has ſeldom been the policy of this country to infringe, we refuſe, ſhould they obſtinately perſiſt in their attachment to the mode of government they have thought proper to eſtabliſh, to make any further reſtitutions than France might chooſe to purchaſe by the ceſſion of thoſe places in Dutch Brabant, which ſhe acquired under her treaty of peace with Holland. — But, mark our liberal policy! if, we ſay, the Stadtholder could be reinſtated in his authority, and the ancient regime ſuffered to ſuperſede the new conſtitution, agreeable to what our cabinet, though their ſurmiſes are oppoſed by the powerful evidence of facts, affects to imagine is the wiſh of a great majority of the inhabitants, we ſhould then relax from theſe conditions, and probably, loſing all idea of indemnity to ourſelves in the

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violence of their affection for *regular governments*, miniſters would not feel much reluctance in giving them back every thing except the Cape, and poſſibly even that, without any *other compenſation*.

Such are the propoſals of our government, and I will not call them unreaſonable or extravagant, but I aſk any perſon who can diveſt himſelf for a moment of all prejudice, to read Lord Malmſbury's confidential memorials, with the account he gives of his converſation with M. De la Croix, and to forbear ſmiling if he is able. We cannot certainly cenſure miniſters for endeavouring to make as good terms as they could;—and we likewiſe know that it is a practice in great repute with a certain part of the trading world to aſk as much again as they mean to inſiſt upon, ſo that after their generoſity has conſented to make very conſiderable abatements they may ſtill come off gainers by the bargain—We are however to bear in mind that they were ſufficiently acquainted with the temper

of

of the French Directory, to be ſenſible that the practice of a higgler would not do with them.

But what, methinks I hear ſome exclaim, would you have us ſubmit to ignominious conditions? Shall Engliſhmen receive the law from the French, and be governed by any article they may think proper to inſert in their conſtitution, however it may militate againſt our intereſt and rights? I anſwer generally no—I think not only that there was an abſurdity in conſtituting Belgium an integral part of the French Republic, while the poſſeſſion of it depended on ſo precarious a tenure, as the fortune of war, but alſo that France in that inſtance, acted with a contemtuous diſregard of the powers with whom ſhe was contending, which was as unjuſtifiable as inconſiderate; ſince it was in fact telling them, "You can never "by acquiſitions in another quarter en- "title yourſelves to demand the reſtitu- "tion of theſe provinces, or if you "ſhould, we ſhall not liſten to your de-

mands,

" mands, — we have decreed that they " ſhall form a part of the French Em- " pire, and neither reaſon nor juſtice,— " nothing but the ſword, can make us " conſent to their alienation ;—though " at the ſame time, if we conclude a " peace with you, we expect that you " reſtore all the conqueſts you have " made upon us." She is nevertheleſs, under another, ſort of obligation to reſcue them, if poſſible, from a future ſubjection to the houſe of Auſtria ;—ſhe could fairly pledge herſelf ſo far, and after having encouraged them to gratify their predilection for liberty, after they had expreſſed a deſire to be taken under her protection, it would be baſely criminal were ſhe not to make it her firſt concern, (if her ſituation enabled her) when peace came to be agitated, to ſhield them from the revengeful fangs of deſpotiſm. Here however lies the queſtion,—are the ſacrifices we offer an equivalent for the reſtitutions we require? or is the diſproportion ſo great, as not to ſuffer us to wonder that the French Government rejected our propoſals with indignation?

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In order to form a juſt deciſion on this point, we muſt in idea exchange ſituations with France, and then aſk ourſelves what would have been our ſenſations if ſhe had demanded, as a *ſine qua non*, that we ſhould give up Belgium * and Italy in return for Martinico, Tobago and St. Lucia, together with a ſettlement or two in the Eaſt Indies, which every body knows are not extremely valuable, and beſides, that if ſhe allowed us to retain poſſeſſion of a place which we had acquired by a treaty of peace with another power, we muſt make a retroceſſion of Martinico, or of St. Lucia

* It may be proper to obſerve, that Lord Malmſbury did not inſiſt *as a ſine qua non*, upon the actual reſtitution of Belgium to the Emperor, but he did require not only that it ſhould be diſunited from France, but alſo that it ſhould be ſecured from *the probability* of ever again falling into the hands of that power; and where then was the ſecurity, that if it was now declared an independent ſtate it would not again fall under the dominion of the houſe of Auſtria? If its perfect independence could be effectually guaranteed, and if a propoſition of that nature had been made by us, the caſe indeed would have been different, and France, had ſhe refuſed to liſten to ſuch propoſition under pretence of its not being agreeable to her conſtitution, would I believe have found herſelf condemned by the whole world.

and Tobago? Surely no one who has any knowledge of the reſpective value of thoſe objects, will deny that we ſhould have felt and acted nearly as ſhe has done.—Here then I believe we come at one, and perhaps the principal cauſe of the failure of this negotiation.—But independent of this, can we imagine that the Directory would enter cordially into a negotiation with men whoſe furious, yet impotent endeavours to prevent the eſtabliſhment of a political ſyſtem in the fate of which their hearts were bound up, and whoſe rancorous and implacable enmity to the principles of that ſyſtem, and to themſelves as its ſupporters, manifeſted in a thouſand ways, if it did not give birth to perſonal reſentment, muſt have excited their contempt and deteſtation?—Beſides, had they not too much reaſon to diſtruſt the ſincerity of thoſe men, and to conclude that their pretended diſpoſition to peace was only a trick deſigned to throw the odium of continuing the war upon them, and to render it unpopular in that country, and popular in this?—On theſe grounds

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the conduct of the Directory, in my opinion at leaſt, ſtands in a great meaſure excuſed, though perhaps completely to juſtify it would be impoſſible.—Their behaviour throughout the buſineſs has been conſidered as peculiarly offenſive, and in its abrupt termination unneceſſarily inſulting—The policy however of this laſt ſtep, is what I ſhould be leaſt inclined to defend, for had they proceeded in the diſcuſſion, both themſelves and the world would have been better able to judge whether our Court acted with good faith, in the advances it had made, and was ſincere in the pacific ſentiments it profeſſed to entertain; and if this was really the caſe, they need not, I fancy, have abſolutely deſpaired of the adjuſtment of terms, as facts of which they cannot be ignorant furniſhed them with reaſon to expect that his Britannic Majeſty, after a proper degree of pertinacity had been tried without ſucceſs, might have found himſelf diſpoſed to relax from a conſiderable part of the conditions, on which the

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preſent ſtate of things obliged him to inſiſt.

They know full well, that the preſent adminiſtration are apt to aſpire after what they can have no *rational* hope of obtaining, and they know, likewiſe, that it is not impoſſible for this adminiſtration to relinquiſh to-morrow what to day they contend for in the abſolute tone of omnipotence. — But what muſt appear to *us*, judging from a view of the circumſtances we are acquainted with, to have been the real object of our government, in ſetting on foot the late negotiation? Was it to procure an equitable peace? or was it to unite England, and divide France? was it to efface the recollection of paſt meaſures, and to turn the courſe of popular indignation? —was it to revive the plea of neceſſity, and to draw forth all the reſources that yet remain for the continuance of the war? Cautious as miniſters have been, yet might we not have anticipated from their language and conduct the event they now acknowledge to have looked

for

for, but affect to deplore? Was it not clear, that while they profeſſed to be uſing their utmoſt endeavours to obtain peace, nothing could be more remote from their expectations?—And do they not ſeem, inſtead of neglecting nothing conſiſtent with reaſon and equity that was calculated to enſure ſucceſs, to have acted in a manner directly the reverſe? It was obviouſly neceſſary, if their views were inſincere, to aſſume the *appearance* of ſincerity, to ſuffer the negotiation to proceed to a certain point, and on no account to break it off themſelves, unleſs they could not provoke the Directory to do ſo.—They muſt have known, that France would not readily liſten to any terms which required her to give up the Netherlands, and yet without holding out any thing that might have operated as an inducement, or ſcarcely offering the ſemblance of a compenſation for the ſacrifice, they make this article, a *ſine qua non*,—a condition from which they peremptorily declare, they will on no conſideration depart—What concluſion are we to draw from this?

this?—And in what light are we to view that ominous meſſage to parliament, which came from his Majeſty about the time when our propoſals were tranſmitted to Lord Malmſbury, inviting them to be prepared for the vigorous proſecution of the war, if his endeavours to reſtore peace ſhould prove ineffectual? It might certainly have been deſigned to intimidate the enemy, but correſponding as it does with what miniſters have on other occaſions ſuffered to eſcape them, is it not rather to be conſidered as an indication of ſentiments very different from thoſe by which they pretended to be actuated?

For my own part too I muſt confeſs, that the publication of Mr. Burke's deteſtable pamphlet, (a work, which ſnatches the palm of infamy from Robeſpierre) at the particular period in which it made its appearance, led me from the firſt to expect what has ſince followed, and I have converſed with many of the friends of miniſters, who owned that on this point they thought as I did: for

for can we imagine that a perſon ſo connected with adminiſtration by the habits of friendſhip, and by the ſtrong ties of gratitude, ſhould publiſh a book at the very moment when they were ſending a negotiator to treat with the French Directory for peace, which, after vilifying with the moſt opprobrious epithets, and diſtorted repreſentations, that rancour and ingenuity could ſupply, the conſtitution and government of France, and perſonally abuſing its preſent rulers, endeavours to animate the coaleſced powers, and this country in particular, to a perſeverance in the cruſade, till they had completely extirpated thoſe principles which it is now believed by all well informed perſons, the far greater part of the French nation would never renounce but with their lives—I ſay, can we imagine that he would have done this, without previouſly knowing that it would not be diſagreeable to his patrons, particularly, when it is recollected that this book had been written, printed, and even advertiſed long before, but was confidently

dently ſaid to be withheld from the public eye by the interference of miniſters?

Nor is it poſſible for us to forget, that their ſentiments were once exactly ſimilar to thoſe here avowed by Mr. Burke, and that they purſued with equal inveteracy the object he recommends, as long as they could delude themſelves with the ſmalleſt hope of ſucceſs.

If from theſe conſiderations we do not doubt the ſincerity of miniſters on the preſent occaſion, we may at leaſt, I think, aſſure ourſelves that the war will now be carried on till peace is no longer a matter of choice, or till my fellow citizens ſhall rouſe from their lethargy, and *reſcue themſelves* from that accumulated weight of calamity with which an infernal policy threatens to overwhelm them.

LETTER

LETTER II.

YES, I repeat it, that unleſs my fellow citizens ſhall reſume ſome portion of their ancient ſpirit, and, with all the force of native authority, command the return of peace, there is every reaſon to apprehend that a deſolating war will be continued till the Chancellor of the Exchequer has exhauſted every reſource, and then perhaps we ſhall be compelled to accept from the generoſity of the enemy terms much worſe than thoſe which we might now exact from their juſtice. And why? Becauſe an equitable peace could not be obtained? Surely not. If any dependence is to be placed on the concurring teſtimony of the numerous accounts we have received, the people of France feel the value and the neceſſity of that bleſſing as much as the people of England, and, conſtituted as

the French Government is, where the legiſlative power, the depoſitary of the public ſentiment, overawes the executive, we can ſcarcely bring ourſelves to imagine that the latter would dare, in a matter of ſuch importance, to follow their own will, in contempt of that of the people. The French were eagerly deſirous of peace, though they could not forget their ſufferings, their exertions, and their ſucceſſes; and had terms been offered which bore the appearance of equity, and which in the leaſt comported, or ſeemed reconcilable with their ideas, the Directory, I venture to affirm, whatever might be their private inclination, would not have rejected them. True indeed it is that our preſent Miniſtry ſtand very much in the way of any accommodation, nor will they be able to effect one, upon ſuch conditions as we ſhould probably conceive ourſelves entitled to expect, or as would be granted us through any other medium. The French nation, as well as their government, are deeply ſenſible how much and in what manner they are indebted to them,

them, and they will treat their propoſals for a reconciliation as the forced ſubmiſſion of men, who, after murdering their friends and relatives, tried, but in vain, to reduce them into ſlavery, or to accompliſh their deſtruction.

But you will ſay, is it not hard,—is it not wrong, that the innocent ſhould ſuffer for the guilty? France knows that ſhe cannot charge the People of England with being the real authors of her calamities; and yet ſhe might perceive that the effects of her indignation againſt their government would fall on them alone. Alas! the paſſions and ſtrong propenſities of human nature ſeldom range themſelves under the conduct of clear-ſighted reaſon: they often miſtake their object, and are ſeldom careful in ſelecting means beſt adapted to their end.

The greater part of thoſe to whom I particularly addreſs myſelf, need, I am perſuaded, no arguments from me to convince them that peace is more deſir-

able than the continuance of the war—that the former is eſſentially neceſſary for the preſervation of the ſmall remainder of our comforts, while no limits can be aſſigned to the deſtructive conſequences of the latter. But as there are many who do not ſee this truth in ſo ſtrong a point of view—in whom, though it forces their aſſent, it excites very little intereſt or concern: for their ſake, I ſhall not paſs ſilently over this branch of the ſubject.

From the earlieſt ages to the preſent time, mankind have been deluded into the moſt falſe and pernicious notions reſpecting war—I ſay deluded into them, for it was originally a deluſion practiſed by rapacious, ſanguinary, and ambitious chiefs, upon the almoſt brutiſh ignorance of thoſe over whom, by ſome means or other, they poſſeſſed an uncontrouled influence. Theſe men, ignorant themſelves, and eager to gratify their paſſions at any rate, heſitated not to ſacrifice thouſands and tens of thouſands of their fellow creatures, in order to extend their

domi-

dominion, and to enrich themſelves with plunder. They therefore taught the people who were under their government, that the higheſt degree of virtue and the greateſt glory conſiſted in deſperately hazarding their own lives to deſtroy the inhabitants of other countries, againſt whom their rulers ſhould lead them. The neceſſity of defending themſelves againſt the invaſions of the *ſoi diſant* heroes, gave birth in more peaceable communities to ſentiments nearly ſimilar: and thus they ſoon became univerſally ſpread. That they have been kept alive ſo long, and even in enlightened ages, we ſhall not find much reaſon to be ſurprized at, when we conſider that the world has at all times been infeſted with monſters, who only differed in their increaſed means of knowledge from thoſe I have deſcribed above. The monſters of Greece, of Rome, and of modern Europe, though the progreſs of reaſon was againſt them, had the popular prejudice in their favour. Unnatural as was the doctrine, it had been long eſtabliſhed, and never

ſeriouſly

ſeriouſly diſputed; nay, Genius had ſtepped forward in its ſupport, and allotted the firſt place in the temple of Fame to warlike atchievements.

The deadly gloom of prejudice is now however faſt diſpelling, and the broad daylight of pure philoſophy breaks in apace. There are numbers now who ſtart with horror at the idea of war: inſtead of allowing it to be glorious, they conſider it as a moral evil that has no parallel; and that, unleſs undertaken and proſecuted ſolely on the defenſive, it can only be called a legalized ſyſtem of rapine and murder:—and of rapine the moſt unwarranted, and murder the moſt atrocious; ſince the highwayman can plead a ſort of neceſſity for robbing you of your purſe; and he to whom the appellation of murderer has been hitherto excluſively applied, never commits the horrid deed, which ranks firſt in the liſt of crimes, unleſs impelled by revenge, or ſome powerful paſſion, which the victim of his fury had excited, or elſe with a view of ſecuring his own life,

life, already demanded by the laws of the ſtate. But thoſe who ſend armies to invade other countries, have not the excuſe of the highwayman for the depredations they occaſion, nor of the murderer for cauſing the deſtruction of multitudes, againſt whom they could have no ground whatever of quarrel.

I ſhall not here enquire into the origin of the war in which we are moſt unhappily engaged. It were not only a tedious, but alſo an uſeleſs taſk, to reſtate facts and arguments which have been ſo often brought forward, and which ſeem beyond diſpute to fix upon us, or more properly upon our government, the charge of aggreſſion. I ſhall therefore content myſelf with laying it down as an incontrovertible poſition, that a war commenced from *neceſſity* ſhould be terminated when that neceſſity ceaſes to exiſt, or at leaſt (which is granting far more than I think allowable) when greater advantages are to be expected from its termination than from its continuance.

It

It will not ſurely be contended, that there is at this moment an actual neceſſity for perſevering in the war. We have, it is true, been precipitated into a ſituation rather embarraſſing. A pacific diſcuſſion was agreed to. France had before peremptorily declared that ſhe never would conſent to make Belgium even a ſubject of negociation; and yet, when called upon to propoſe terms, our government as peremptorily inſiſts upon the ſurrender of thoſe provinces, without, as has been obſerved, offering an equivalent; and to enforce its demand, declares that it has entered into an engagement with the Emperor, which *pledges us never to lay down our arms till every inch of his former territory is either regained or reſtored!!*

While ſuch then was the diſpoſition of the parties, it was impoſſible but they muſt ſeparate as they met, or rather not ſo amicably. But will the people of England ſanction with their approbation this proceeding of their government? I fancy not. They will recollect that the

the union of Belgium with France was not an arbitrary act on the part of the latter—it was not compelling a conquered people to enrol themſelves in the liſt of French citizens, and to ſubmit to French laws. No: it was but concurring (ſomewhat too haſtily perhaps) in the act of an independent nation, whom ſhe had reſcued from the galling fetters of deſpotic power, and who, for the ſecurity of their liberties, which, when recovered but a ſhort time before by their own exertions, they had found themſelves too weak to maintain, deſired to unite with their deliverers.

Belgium then having renounced all ſubjection to the houſe of Auſtria, becauſe ſhe thought its government oppreſſive, or ſay if you pleaſe, becauſe ſhe gave the preference to another ſyſtem, certainly ſtands in a ſituation materially different from that of the branch of an empire, which the force of arms alone has ſeparated from its parent ſtate—But though after France has engaged to protect the Belgians, it would be the moſt

cruel perfidy to give them up, without compulſion, to the tyranny from which they have ſought a refuge in her boſom, yet, ſtill it muſt be remembered, that the union of the two countries would favour her commerce, and encreaſe her reſources probably in no inconſiderable degree, and theſe are things which doubtleſs ſhould be taken into the account — They were not however, excluded—A compenſation was hinted at, but it did not pleaſe—Nothing ſhort of the recovery of Belgium to the Emperor, will ſatisfy our miniſters, and for the *chance* of effecting this, they reſolve to proſecute the war—Truly the experiment might be very well worth making if it coſt nothing, but before we decide upon its propriety, we ſhould calculate the expence it will require, and then balance that expence againſt the value of the object that we propoſe to obtain, deducting for the uncertainty of obtaining it.

It may be of ſome importance to us in a commercial point of view that the Netherlands

Netherlands ſhould not remain a part of France, but that importance has I believe, been much over-rated — And as for the advantage which the Emperor would find in regaining it, though I ſhall not quarrel with miniſters for procuring him as favourable terms as they can, in the way of negotiation, even by the ſacrifice of our conqueſts, yet to continue the war on his account, and for the ſake of putting him in poſſeſſion of a country to which the inhabitants have annihilated his title, is I am ſure, carrying our generoſity farther than juſtice or common ſenſe can require.—We have only then to conſider how much our intereſt would be promoted by detaching the ci-devant Auſtrian Netherlands from France, — what the attempt to detach them by a perſeverance in hoſtilities may coſt us,—and what is the probability of its ultimately ſucceeding.— On the firſt of theſe heads, I confeſs myſelf not fully competent to ſpeak—Say however that if Belgium and France remain united, our commerce will be ſomewhat abridged, and a few of the ſources of

that exuberance of wealth, which, unequally diſtributed, ſerves but to generate luxury, corruption, and a thouſand evils, cut off,—but recollect that it will not infringe upon *our* rights, nor in any reſpect injure *our* political condition,—that neither will it add to the burdens with which induſtry is already oppreſſed, increaſe the difficulty it finds to obtain neceſſaries, nor remove further from its reach all the comforts and conveniencies of life.

But for this mighty object what ſacrifices muſt we make? What will the millions be compelled to ſacrifice who have no concern in it? How many human beings torn from their families, their connections, and all that they hold dear will be dreadfully hurried from the preſent ſtage of exiſtence? And how many of the ſurvivors muſt drain to the very dregs the bitter cup of miſery? To the mind that is not void of every humane principle, that can feel for the ſufferings of others as well as diſown its own intereſts, I will leave the taſk of filling up the

the picture.—I will leave ſuch a mind to calculate the effects of encreaſing to an unknown extent, that enormous weight of debt and taxation, which now preſſes to the ground all that is moſt valuable among us, to conſider the poſſibility of having the war brought to our own doors, and what might be the conſequences we ſhould then have to deplore, and I would wiſh it to dwell for a moment upon the idea of bartering human blood for commercial advantages. But hold! are we ſure after all of obtaining thoſe advantages? No, we have a chance it is true, but when we call to mind what France has already atchieved, and compare the nature of her reſources with the nature and ſtate of our own, I think we ſhall find that the chance is not much in our favour. Good God! then can we allow ourſelves to imagine that the continuance of the war might be more beneficial to us than peace? It is impoſſible; madneſs would ſmile at the idea, but to reaſon and humanity it is frightful—Intereſt however, and a madneſs

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ten thouſand times worſe than that which is only a privation of the rational faculty, maintain this opinion; and with them I ſhall leave it, convinced that to all but them it muſt appear not leſs odious than falſe.

But to what purpoſe do we think and reaſon upon the ſubject, unleſs our ſentiments and our will are publicly, unequivocally, and unanimouſly expreſſed? Shall we, the great majority of the nation, ſuffer ourſelves without an effort to be dragged into a compliance with what we decidedly diſapprove? And yet what avails our ſilent indignation, or our ſolitary murmurs? Miniſters diſregard the one, and are forward to conſtrue the other in their own favour.—Believe me, fellow-citizens, if you deſire to ward off the evils with which you are threatened, prompt and reſolute meaſures are neceſſary. What would be the moſt proper, I ſhall not pretend to adviſe; and to enter a caution againſt raſhneſs and violence, would equally betray a diſ-

a diſtruſt of your judgment. You can at leaſt take a hint from thoſe who, in the fatal paroxyſm of miſtaken zeal, offered their lives and fortunes in ſupport of the war—you can come forward in your reſpective pariſhes and diſtricts, and publiſh your proteſt againſt the farther proſecution of it, declaring that you will not concur in a meaſure ſo dreadfully impolitic; and that ſhould miniſters notwithſtanding perſevere in oppoſition to your will, you ſhall hold them reſponſible for all the conſequences which their obſtinacy may produce.

A ſtep ſo ſimple and eaſy, I think, you cannot heſitate to adopt, unleſs ſome other ſhould ſeem to you more eligible; and if the reſult ſhould not prove fully anſwerable to your hopes—if miniſters ſhould have courage enough at their peril to proceed, you will at leaſt have the conſoling reflection, amid the calamities in which you may be involved, that you did not contemplate their approach without endeavouring to avert them:

them: and you will likewiſe have the glory of ſetting an example to other nations and ages, the happy effects of which may exceed the moſt ſanguine computation.

LETTER

LETTER III.

DESIGNING to be as brief as poſſible, I had thrown my pen aſide at the concluſion of the laſt letter, but I reſume it to add a few words which I cannot excuſe myſelf for omitting.—I am aware that it will be imputed to me from a certain quarter, that I have betrayed a predilection for the French, and have pleaded their cauſe rather than that of my own country—Diſclaiming as I do, the imputation, and obvious as its abſurdity muſt be to every unprejudiced perſon, I know likewiſe, that if publicly exhibited, nothing but ſilent contempt would be its due,—and therefore to anticipate it might ſeem neither neceſſary nor wiſe—It is not however, in the leaſt with a view to my own vindication, but merely to unburthen my mind of a reflection or two which ſuggeſt themſelves

as connected with the charge, that I notice it.—Not ſo unnatural as to prefer the intereſts of another country to thoſe of my own, I thank God I could open the portals of happineſs equally to the whole human race; in every nation I could embrace a friend and a brother, and, ſtrange as it may ſound, I could wiſh them all to enjoy an equal ſhare of privileges and advantages. I am ſo far influenced by local attachment, that I ſhould direct my individual endeavours to promote the happineſs of my own country firſt, but it would rejoice me at the ſame time to hear that other nations were advancing in the ſame path, and with as quick a ſtep as my own; and to thwart their progreſs, or to ſeek the advantage of the community to which I belonged in the ruin or injury of another, is a mode of conduct which I ſhould only think calculated for the infernal regions. Indeed it can ſeldom happen that one nation ſhould benefit itſelf by injuring another; a crooked and malignant policy has too often made the attempt, which inſtead of ſucceeding, generally

nerally recoiled upon itſelf. The intereſts of nations as well as individuals may and will ſometimes claſh, but would they conſider that their great intereſt is to preſerve peace and harmony, little differences would eaſily be adjuſted, and they would never decide a diſpute with that dreadful and uncertain arbiter the ſword.

It is certainly the intereſt of different nations to live in peace, and in the moſt harmonious intercourſe with each other, and were it not for ill conſtituted governments the truth would be inſtantly ſeen and ſteadily acted upon.—America is an inſtance in point. What provocations has ſhe received from ſome of the belligerent powers in the preſent conteſt? what injuries, what inſults, has ſhe ſubmitted to? * and yet ſhe has not, in revenge,

* I would not however, though an Engliſhman, be underſtood to approve of the partiality ſhe has ſhewn to this country, looking back as I do, to the period of her revolution, and conſidering the conduct which England and France then reſpectively adopted towards her. To forgive I allow is noble, but to aſſiſt an enemy againſt a benefactor, is ſurely a refinement upon ingratitude.

made war againſt either of the parties, no—ſhe knows too well that this would be the proceeding of a man who to obtain the verdict of a farthing damages for ſome trifling affront, ſhould ſpend his eſtate, and expoſe himſelf beſides to perſonal danger.

Neither however has ſhe diſgraced herſelf by a mean and puſillanimous conduct, but perſuaded that the juſtice of her cauſe would be ſeconded by firm and ſpirited remonſtrance with more real advantage, if not with greater effect than by arms, ſhe has at once preſerved her dignity, her citizens, her wealth, and in a great degree her commerce.—Indeed was that ſublime and benevolent idea of Henry the IVth of France, mentioned by Mr. Paine, adopted, of compoſing a court of judicature, conſiſting of delegates from different ſtates, which ſhould determine all diſputes that happen between thoſe ſtates, and to abide by whoſe deciſion each member of this grand ſociety ſhould pledge itſelf to the reſt, a nation would have a remedy ſtill better than remonſtrance for any injuries

injuries it might receive, and a remedy which would promiſe, under wiſe regulations, to exclude almoſt the poſſibility of war among the ſtates thus aſſociated.

I pity thoſe perſons who ſtill adhere to an opinion which was not only faſhionable, but had ſome foundation in reaſon a few years ago, that the French are natural enemies to this country. While they were under the government of the Bourbons, we had doubtleſs a ſufficient excuſe for regarding them in that light. The Bourbons were tyrants, and, like ſome reigning princes, had an innate averſion to every thing that bore the appearance of liberty: they were likewiſe ambitious, and could not endure a neighbour as powerful as themſelves.— From theſe cauſes they were ſworn enemies to England, and had it been in their power, they would have carried towards her the maxim of *delenda eſt Carthago* into effect, while in purſuit of any favourite object, they valued neither their ſubjects lives nor property.— The people then ſunk in the moſt abject ſlavery, were but the blind inſtruments of their

their monarch's will; not their perſon alone were at the command of theſe tyrants, but to them and to their prieſts, they yielded the direction of the paſſions and faculties of their mind.—It was therefore, at that time, no very difficult matter to inſpire them, when their tyrants thought fit, with an enmity againſt the Engliſh, as violent as it was ſenſeleſs.—This enmity, however, even then appears to have died with the occaſion which was made to excite it, and was far from ſettling into an inveterate rancour.—But mark how the ſcene is changed; the family of the Bourbons is overthrown for ever, and with it the deſpotic ſyſtem of government which enſlaved and afflicted France. The French people now are ſovereign, they are all, they think for themſelves, they act for themſelves, and they have not warranted us to believe that a whole nation can be actuated by the helliſh ſentiments and policy which individual monſters adopted and propagated. On the contrary, have they not on numberleſs occaſions evinced the moſt partial regard for the Engliſh nation? At the commencement

of

of the revolution was not this ſentiment univerſally diſplayed, both in public and private, in the hotel, and in the receſſes of domeſtic intercourſe, as well as at the *fete* and in the legiſlative aſſembly? Every Engliſhman who was then in France will bear witneſs to the fact. With what enthuſiaſtic fondneſs did they cheriſh at that period the idea, that the fatal rivalry which has ſo long ſubſiſted between the two nations was at an end, and that the love of liberty, which it was hoped equally characterized each, would be the pledge and the cement of a laſting friendſhip? Did not their king endeavour to engage them, under pretence of the family compact, to ſupport Spain againſt this country, in the affair of Nootka Sound, and did they not immediately deprive him of the dangerous power of making war? Did they not exert themſelves to the utmoſt to avoid a rupture, before this unhappy conteſt commenced, though the hoſtility of our government to the revolution, and their diſpoſition forcibly to oppoſe it, had long been notorious?

And

And have they not ever ſince, except in the moment of revolutionary delirium, expreſſed and manifeſted an unabated affection for the *people* of England?—They are now at war with our government, as we were formerly with theirs, but ſurely we, who boaſt of our freedom and independence, ſhall not exhibit to them a picture of their former ſelves.

Many among us are too apt to take up and retain opinions without ſcrutinizing them; elſe what can be more horrid and ſelf-contradictory, than the thought that man, enlightened and independent, is the natural enemy of his ſpecies. Monſters, it is true, there are and always will be; but it is not from an exception that we judge of a law—it is not from them that we are to take our eſtimate of the human character. Men in a ſtate of civilization, whether from a ſenſe of intereſt or from a principle of philanthropy, are not foes to each other—and why ſhould nations? The former, perhaps it will be ſaid, are reſtrained by laws from

from diſcovering their natural diſpoſition. But this I grant only to a certain degree: in an enlightened ſtate, if none of thoſe reſtraints exiſted, a few timid monſters might ſhew themſelves, and the bold might become more daring, but a ſyſtem of mutual injury would never be countenanced.

It is to deſpotic and ill conſtructed governments that nations are indebted for almoſt all their ſufferings. They nouriſh principles which have led the intelligent and the humane to conſider war as a *neceſſary* evil:—principles which operating upon the private conduct of an individual, would render him an object of univerſal deteſtation. Reaſon, ere long, it is to be hoped, will eradicate theſe principles, by renovating thoſe governments; and then that glorious æra ſhall arrive for which the philoſopher has laboured, and the philanthropiſt ſighed; which even in proſpect raviſhes; and which, though many have deſpaired of, more ſtill look for with increaſing confidence: then ſcenes of

bloodſhed, deſolation, and miſery—then oppreſſion and legalized injuſtice, ſhall be no more: then the widow ſhall not have to lament her huſband, the child its parent, nor the parent his children, murdered. Then mankind ſhall be no more diſtinguiſhed into tyrants and ſlaves, patricians and plebeians; *and the labourer in the full enjoyment of health and ſtrength, ſober and induſtrious, ſhall not be compelled to aſk from an inſulting ſpecies of charity, a weekly modicum for the ſupport of his family.* But then, oh ecſtatic thought! then peace and felicity, as perfect as human felicity can be, ſhall eſtabliſh their reign; the nations of the earth ſhall form one harmonious family; and individual man ſhall feel his dignity, be ſecure in the enjoyment of his freedom and his rights, and not only find the fruits of his labour equal to his comfortable ſubſiſtence, but be able to dedicate a portion of his time to intellectual improvement.

POSTSCRIPT.

THE preceding Letters were written immediately ſubſequent to the event which impelled the author to take up an indignant pen; but circumſtances, which it is not neceſſary here to particularize, retarded their publication. In the mean time freſh events of no ſmall importance are preſſing upon us; and thoſe to which time has given birth afford an awful preſage of what yet remains in the womb of futurity. Mantua has at length fallen, after the Auſtrian army, which in all the confidence of ſucceſs haſtened to its relief, had experienced a fate ſtill worſe than that of thoſe which preceded it in the ſame attempt. In conſequence, the French army in that quarter is now in a great meaſure diſengaged: at leaſt thoſe exertions

tions to recruit it are no longer requiſite, which either weakened or prevented other operations.

That the Emperor, completely diſpoſſeſſed of his Italian dominions, diſappointed of ſuccour from Ruſſia, open to the hoſtile deſigns of Pruſſia, and with reſources exhauſted or precarious, will conſult his own intereſt by concluding a ſeparate peace, now appears highly probable. *Aſſertions* to the contrary, I know, are continually made; but let us not be deceived by intereſted declaimers. Does our experience of German faith lead us to believe that if France ſhould ſay to the Emperor, 'We will make peace 'with you to-morrow on theſe terms— 'Belgium ſhall remain with us, but Italy 'ſhall be reſtored without any compen-'ſation,' the offer would be refuſed?— Let us recollect that honeſty is ſeldom found among thieves: good faith between thoſe who are engaged in a bad cauſe, is not rationally to be expected.

But

But our attention ſhould be called to what has happened at our own doors. Ireland has been menaced with an invaſion; and, in my opinion, had not the hand of Providence interfered, it would at this moment have been detached from the Britiſh Empire. The force however which was ſent againſt it, notwithſtanding our ſo much boaſted naval ſuperiority, arrived unmoleſted and unlooked for at the place of its deſtination, and, prevented from accompliſhing its object by the ſole enemy it had to dread, the winds, it has for the greateſt part returned to its own ports in ſafety. Again it is concentrating; and, if we may truſt report, is receiving very powerful reinforcements. Another expedition is without doubt preparing; and many imagine it is intended againſt England itſelf. This I do not at preſent ſee much reaſon to apprehend; but at whatever quarter the blow is ſtruck, the event we may fear will not be ſo favourable to us as in the laſt inſtance. France is even now, perhaps, capable of inflicting a wound

wound that we ſhould ſeverely feel; and what then will ſhe not be able to effect ſhould Auſtria ceaſe to be our confederate, and ſhould her vaſt power (to ſay nothing of Spain and Holland) be oppoſed ſingly to what we could exert—we, who muſt not only appear to her, but to the reflecting part of ourſelves, as criminal?

But ah! to whom am I addreſſing myſelf?—To thoſe who, blinded by paſſion or prejudice, or ſunk in the moſt unaccountable lethargy, have ſo long ſuffered themſelves to be dragged through crime to deſtruction? Will my fellow countrymen for ever remain inſenſible to their rights, their intereſts, their duties? No—it cannot be. Many of them, I am perſuaded, have even virtuous motives for their conduct: they love internal tranquility; but they ſee not that they are lending a hand to deſtroy it: they do not reflect that while ſyſtems no leſs unjuſt in their principle than pernicious in their effects

fects are ſuffered to exiſt, a nation can have no ſecurity for any of its enjoyments.

February 21, 1797.

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